/50 cont'd/

585 stood outside the door waiting for a Taoist priest to perform the ritual before entering the house. After that she entered the house escorted by a woman. In the evening the bridegroom's family also held a dinner to entertain their relatives and friends, and that brought an end to the wedding ceremony. After the wedding was over, the two bridesmaids were each rewarded with 300 cash and three catties of pork. The cash was given by the bride's family and the pork by the bridegroom's.

On the morning of the third day, the new couple went back to the bride's home; but on the fourth, they went over to the bridegroom's home again and returned to the bride's home the day after.

585 608 Thereafter, the bridegroom remained in his wife's home and became a member of her family, sharing all the privileges and obligations. After the death of his parents-in-law, he may either move away from his wife's family with his wife, or change his surname to that of his father-in-law so that he becomes a member of that family forever.

585 I did not have the opportunity to observe personally the manner in which the wedding of the ch'ü-hsi type is celebrated. However, it was said that it is entirely similar to the wedding of the chao-chui type except that the roles of the families of the man and woman are reversed.

● 587 There is no ceremony when a widow remarries, nor are there any betrothal gifts. When they decide to be married, the man merely furnishes a chicken, which they eat together, and the marriage is concluded.

There are some additional points worth noting about marriage among the Miao.

582 /51/ (1) Those who have the same surnames are not allowed to marry one another. However, if they are sure that they have no particular blood relationship but simply have the same surname, the marriage is sometimes permissable.

(2) The average age to marry for either sex is about twenty.

585 (3) The Miao people avoid getting married in the third month of the lunar year, when the cotton flower and a plant called toon

/139 cont'd/

Third month, seventh day. (Sunday)

There was a dense fog this morning, and as we could not go out, I wrote several letters. As one of Mr. Wang's workmen intended to leave Oao-t'ing today, I gave him the letter to mail. Yüan-chiung's sickness was completely over by this time, and he had recovered his spirits. We roamed all day long in the neighboring Ch'i and Hsiao villages. In a number of places we saw Hsiao girls at work hulling rice, /140/ but, seeing the approach of strangers, they hid away immediately, so that we had no chance to take pictures of them.

In the afternoon a Chinese peddler came from Pao-t'ing with a load of black fish for sale. We bought two and a half catties for two hundred copper coins, and they made a rare dish in this deep mountain valley.

Third month, eighth day. (Monday)

This morning the fog was again dense till eight o'clock when the sun broke through. We walked leisurely to the lower Hsiao village on the other side. The village was occupied entirely by Hsiao, ten families in all, with three names, Li, Liu, and Huang. Headman /pao chang/ Li welcomed us warmly to his house, and we had a long, pleasant conversation together. When we were leaving, he sent his workmen to carry several catties of potatoes to be brought back with us. In return we gave him gifts of salt, kerosene, candles, etc.

In the afternoon we went to the upper Hsiao village to attend a Hsiao wedding. The bride was already thirty years old and had been married before to a Hsiao of Ta-pen village. When her husband died, she had brought her son and daughter back to live with her mother. Now she was to be married for the second time to a Hsiao of the same village. The bridegroom was of about the same age. At the ceremony the couple did not appear in any special apparel; they wore just plain clothes, a little cleaner than usual.

/140 cont'd/

587 In the evening the bride was accompanied to her husband's house by a female go-between. She carried her small not yet weaned baby boy at her breast. The groom welcomed her to the banquet which had been prepared, to which he had invited many friends and relatives. As wine flowed into their mouths, songs flowed out. First the guests took turns singing songs to the bride, and the bride answered them, one by one. The bride then moved to sing songs reciprocally with the parents of the groom. But all the time, the groom stood aside, attending everyone, and did not drink or sing. We turned on the phonograph at the door to add to their good spirits and were dragged in to have a drink with them. I forced a few mouthfuls down, then hurriedly, on the pretext of going to change the record, sneaked out from their company. Since I was not used to liquor, it would have been embarrassing if I had let myself join them in their drinking spree.

/141/ Third month, ninth day. (Tuesday)

585 574 In the afternoon we moved out of Mr. Wang's house to stay in Wen-hua center. On our way through the upper Hsiao village, we saw a family having a big wedding banquet with a lot of guests. The bridegroom, upon seeing us, rushed out to block our way and insisted upon our joining their wedding party. After resisting in vain, we were dragged in to the party. Yüan-chiung, not able to understand their dialect, was lucky to have escaped their dragging. At the house I was rushed to the head seat at the table. I declined stubbornly, excusing myself by saying that I had to attend to my luggage which was following me and could not stay too long. The host placed a large cup of strong wine in front of me and another for himself, insisting that we both should empty the cups before I left them. His manner was so earnest and serious that I felt there was no room to retreat. I was so taken aback with this large cup of wine that I thought of a scheme. I took half a cup, and, while he was not noticing, I spit it out on the floor, with a handkerchief covering my mouth. The host was still insistent that the cup should

/98 cont./

574 for three days, the same as at the time of "sticking in incense."
585 They are also entertained in rotation by the closest relatives of the host. After breakfast on the third day a large table is set
583 up in the main room. Eloquent elder men and women of the
585 two families are invited to sit down around the table to count and announce the number of presents from the bride's family. First, the suit, shoes, and hat from the bride's parents to the son-in-law are announced, next the material for trousers from the guests to the groom, and then the presents from the bride's family to the elders of the groom's family. Then they record the cash and articles presented by the groom's family in return to the bride's family. For instance, if the dowry from the girl's family was 80 strings of cash, the groom's family returns
[556] 50. In a family of wealth, this money is usually left with the bride and not taken back. The guests who presented trousers receive one or two strings of cash in return. The bridesmaids also receive one or two strings of cash. The bride's family receives a pig's leg, and the go-between gets a pig's head.
[533] While the presents are being announced, the men and women sitting around the table talk and sing, in response to each other. (See Chapter 11, "Folk Songs," songs no. 19, 20, 21, and 22, "Seeing the Guests off on the Third Morning.) During these
585 three days the bride and groom do not share the same room. When the bride's family is escorted back, the bride goes along and stays for one or three days before she comes back to her new home to share the room with the groom.

586 Divorces are very easy with the Miao. The lack of good looks, a difference in wealth between the families, incompatibility, lack of good behavior — any of these constitutes grounds for divorce. Either side may initiate a divorce action. The children of a divorced couple are generally kept by the man, but an unweaned baby is kept by the woman to be restored to the man when it grows up. If the man's family is destitute, the children are kept by the woman's family. After the divorce
●587 either side may remarry at will.

/98 cont./

587 [589] [836] [765] A widow has freedom of sexual intercourse. There is no definite period of mourning for her deceased husband and she may remarry at any time, except that she must have the approval of the brothers of the deceased husband. If either the elder or the younger brother of the deceased wishes to marry the widowed sister-in-law, then she may not marry an outsider. Otherwise she returns to her family to marry again. At the time of the second marriage a sorcerer priest is also asked to perform the ritual. There is no go-between nor a formally set date. At the wedding the "shame-covering parasol" must be opened fully. On reaching her new husband's home she enters by the front entrance. /99/ A widow may marry again and again. Furthermore, she can have a husband marry into her household.

(3) Birth

842 [782] 843 844 Despite the hard life of the Miao, the desire for sons is very strong with both rich and poor. When a Miao man has no son at middle age he must pray to the gods and make a vow for the early birth of a son. A pregnant Miao woman keeps on working. At the time of delivery, they use a bamboo sifter placed on the ground, lined with cotton wadding on which is placed a layer of ragged garments. The woman stands with her legs apart, the body slightly bending, her two hands gripping the side of a bed or a bench. If she happens to be working on a mountainside and does not have time to get back home, then she chooses a place under the shade of a tree where she can easily get a grip. If the newborn child does not cry, she digs [825] out a blood clot from its mouth, or sometimes she keeps a cat ready on the side, and hits it to make it meow so as to startle 845 the infant awake. In case of complicated childbirth, an experienced old woman in the village is asked to help extract the child with the hands. Should an infant die in the womb, it is taken out with a hook, or sometimes a sorcerer priest is

[10 cont.]

591 practiced by one tribe and then followed by others for so long a time that at last it was firmly established. There are only a few couples who are separated. In such cases, they would participate 587 in moon dance, chasing the moon, yao-ma-lang or kan-piao, and other such agencies of free love to seek their mate for a second marriage.

584 [582] When a boy reaches the age of fourteen or fifteen the parents usually negotiate marriage for him. First, a friend or a relative is asked to approach a girl's family to propose marriage. When the latter family approves, the go-between would bring the boy and his parents over for an interview. If both sides are satisfied, they then start negotiations of gifts and dowry and make arrangements for the engagement. If one side is not satisfied the matter is dropped. This refers to total strangers: between those who are acquainted with each other such arrangements are unnecessary. In the old days the gift and dowry were 583 given in terms of the number of cows instead of money. Recently, they have been changed to silver pieces, and the larger the amount, the more magnificent it is for the girl's family. If the amount is small then the girl's status is considered low and it becomes a disgrace to the family. When the question of the bride price is settled (with the Hua Miao the highest gift comes to $100 or more) the go-between appoints a date to convey it to the girl's family. Accepting the gift, the family gives a feast, in which friends and relatives are invited to keep the go-between company and to regale him with meat and wine. This is the engagement. Before the wedding day, the gift donation must be fully paid up through the go-between; but if the girl's family is fond of the future son-in-law, half or all the bride price may be 585 waived. On the wedding day the bridegroom's family sends along a man and a woman to welcome the bride, and sometimes the groom goes there himself. (But the groom must provide meat and wine as a welcome home feast.) The bride's parents would ask a few young girls to keep the bride company the night before, and before daybreak the party would commence the wedding march, the bride shaded under a bridal parasol. On arrival at the groom's house, the members of the party have to leap across

[22 cont.]
586 marriage. The amount of indemnity varies from under one hundred to several hundred dollars, fixed and guaranteed by relatives of both families at the time of negotiation to avoid future complications. Of course, this kind of divorce is not only limited to pre-arranged marriages by parents, the fact is that even in marriages of love, separations often occur due to incompatibility and difference of opinions. But whenever children are born within the wedlock, divorces never occur.

768
587 There are very few cases of young widowhood among the Miao-I. According to customs a young widow may return [589] to her own family six months after the death of her husband. Among the neighboring Long-skirt Miao the wife may go out through the back door to "yao-ma lang" with another man hardly before her husband breathes his last on the deathbed. The children of the deceased father generally remain in his family to be looked after by the grandparents, but the widow may bring them along to her own family if her deceased husband's family is poor and unable to support them. [23] At the same time the widow's parents may proceed to find another husband for their daughter. After marriage the second husband has to pay $4.20 to the wife's family, from which $1.20 is given to the deceased husband's family as "incense money" for sacrifices to his spirit. At the wedding the bride is escorted on foot by two old women to her husband's house, where feasts may be given and the occasion celebrated if his family is well-to-do.

582 Of course, the Miao also have certain taboos in their marriage system. Between sisters and brothers, between cousins and, like the Chinese, between parties of the same surname, no marriage takes place. Sometimes certain families are not matched with others although their surnames are different. For instance, the Yang family at P'ing-chai in the Chou-ch'i district in Lu-shan never have marital relations with the Pan family across the river at Hsin-chai. Between the Chinese and the Miao there are also very few instances of intermarriage. In the country the Miao, who consist of the majority of the population, maintain the most friendly relations in utter social equality

Akha A04
Miao AE5

/110 cont./

A 835 614 178 [574] of the family participate. For this gathering pigs are slaughtered, and rice and alcohol are served. Then the two eldest divide the younger members of the family into two groups, each of which is placed under one of the two heads. Then the two elders decide to form different families from then on. From this moment on the members of the two newly-formed groups may intermarry, no matter what their actual blood relationship may be. /111/

A 582 Otherwise the great importance attached to the obstacles to marriage may be seen from the social customs, which in part are observed in such a way that the young people cannot be tempted to violate the existing obstacles to marriage (see the chapter, "Talent, Knowledge, Character, Morality, and Manners").

A M 582 [614] [621] Theoretically local exogamy does not prevail among either the Akha or the Meau. In the small Meau villages in northern Thailand, however, which are usually inhabited by only a single sib, it is observed in practice, since bearers of other family names are rarely found in one village. Except for the marriage restrictions described, however, there is a free choice of mates; among neither the Akha nor the Meau can an individual be forced to select his partner from a certain sib or a certain village. Savina (1) speaks in general of exogamy.

A M [114]

1. II, p. 284.

It seems to me, however, that he does not interpret the concept quite correctly, for from his description of the conditions it becomes unmistakably clear that true tribal endogamy is involved.

g) Dissolution of Marriage

M ● 587 Upon the death of one of the spouses, the surviving party may marry again among both the Meau and Akha.

A [587] If the wife dies, the husband as a rule simply takes a new wife as though he had never been married (see the section on

AKhā A04
Miao AE5

/111 cont./

M 587 "Courtship and Betrothal" in this chapter); if the husband dies, however, among the Meau the oldest of the younger brothers of the deceased usually takes the widow or widows into his house as his wives. It is up to each individual, however, to choose whether or not he wants to take this course. Matters are usually arranged so that the widows who are old and have many children become the wives of the brother of the deceased; the young and pretty widows, however, who do not as yet have many children, marry an outsider. The brother does not have to pay a purchase price for the widows, but the outsider must pay approximately the sum paid for a girl, with the price adjusted according to the number of children and their youth; M [614] the fewer and the younger the children of the widow are, the higher the price, which is shared by the membersof the sib.

A 587 [292] /112/ Among the Akha the widow again goes to the dancing places with the young girls, after she has removed the veiling of the bamboo cover of her head adornment (see the chapter, "Clothing and Ornaments"); and henceforth her behavior does not differ in any way from that of the girls. In general, however, it is about six to twelve months before she decides to enter another marriage, in which case she must leave her children with the family of the deceased. If she does not want to do this, she has no other course but to renounce any new marriage. As A [589] a consequence, Akha women who are somewhat older and are richer in children usually do not marry again, whereas young women with few or no children usually take the course of re- A marriage. Among neither the Meau nor the Akha, however, M [614] [851] do widows return to their original sib; if the widow was pregnant at the time of the death of the husband, the posthumous child belongs to the sib of the deceased, but later children belong to the new husband.

M 586 [769] Aside from the dissolution of marriage through the death of one of the spouses there is such through divorce. It is rare, however, because among the Meau it is regarded as unacceptable to the ancestors. Savina (1), too, writes that divorces are

1. II, p. 226.

/112 cont./

581 769 extremely rare and usually the parents straighten out the matter. If there is a divorce nevertheless, the ancestors are not informed and no sacrifice is offered, lest the ancestors' attention be drawn to the unpleasant fact.

586 837 Among the Meau a husband has no divorce-right. This is only logical since it is possible for him to marry another girl at any time. The wife, on the other hand, can get a divorce, though this is somewhat difficult. To begin with, the only grounds for divorce for her is her own marital infidelity and her flight with the seducer. First of all, therefore, she has [558] to find a man who is willing to shoulder the unpleasant aspects of adultery and the ensuing loss of his prestige.

[684] If the adulteress refuses to return to her husband, the adulterer and seducer, or his family, must repay the bride price to the deceived husband. If he is not able to do this at once, he must pay it in installments, /113/ and this may sometimes take a long time. All of the woman's children [851] who were born before the complete recovery of the bride price belong to the former husband. The future children belong to the new husband only after the final payment of the bride price.

Moreover, the adulterer sought must be able to take upon [614] himself the enmity of the family of the husband, which is no [578] easy matter if this is a powerful sib. It is precisely in such [595] sibs, however, that unhappy wives are the most common. The husband is often old, has several wives, and is able to buy his new wife by reason of his money. She, in turn, had looked forward to a different life and instead is treated badly by the wives superior to her, but especially by her mother-in-law, whereas the husband pays no attention to her.

Since the regulations mean a heavy burden for the new husband, it is not easy for a wife eager for a divorce to obtain her freedom.

586 648 587 [583] If the wife of a Meau sees absolutely no way out and yet wishes to leave her husband, she turns to a Chinese trader (see the chapter, "Trade"). They travel around a great deal and know all the Meau villages and the conditions prevailing among

/113 cont./

586 the rich and the poor. If the woman is young and pretty, it is
648 usually simple for the trader to persuade another rich Meau in a
[587] far-distant village to take the woman and to repay the bride
583 price to the first husband. Otherwise, the trader sells the
[548] woman as a prostitute to one of the Chinese brothels.

In principle, the deceived husband has the right to kill
586 the adulteress and her seducer; in practice, this is hardly ever
837 done. Both Abadie (1) and Lanjonquière (2) write in the same
[114]

1. Page 167.

2. II.

words that generally the affair is settled through repudiation of the wife and repayment of the bride price. Dhuraratsadorn (3),
[184]

3. Page 169.

however, reports that among the Meau in Thailand, if a wife commits adultery, her husband can get a divorce only with her consent. If she refuses, the marriage has to be continued. He says that the wife has no divorce-right at all because she -- since she is not permitted to return to her parents' house -- would have to support herself. This could be done, however, only under the greatest difficulties.

[114] /114/ These statements sound improbable, and I did not
[184] find them confirmed among the Meau in Thailand. It is possible, however, in case of a seduction of a wife, that the deceived husband asks his village chief to convene the popular assembly. In exceptional cases, the seducer may then be condemned to pay the entire bride price to the husband, while the wife must nevertheless remain with her husband as before.

586 Bad treatment is no more grounds for divorce than wife's laziness or a husband's inability to support his wife or childlessness. In all these cases, too, the bride price is not repaid.

/265 cont./

[592] [621] is the shaman of the village. Personal name, Plai Tschau; family name, Sen Ku. He is a /266/ brother of the deceased [551] father of the chief. The housewife comes from the Meau village Muang Hu (north of Luang Prabang). Eight of her children [164] died at a later age, presumably of malaria. Three of them died only a year ago within one week, which indicates an [734] epidemic. The youngest son, 23 years of age, is completely paralyzed. He lives in the house with his young wife.

[513] House 4. It has only one open bedroom for the entire family, and one for strangers. The father of the house is a son of the shaman. The housewife comes from the Meau village of Pu Kung; she has three boys and two girls. One child died.

[342] [513] House 5: The walling of the house is merely halved bamboo stalks. It has only one sleeping area for the father and the infant. The married son and his wife sleep on mats on the [551] ground. The father of the house is a White Meau with the personal name of Tschai Su, family name Tau. The housewife died a short time ago and five children have died; only the oldest son and an infant are living.

[622] [551] House 6: House of the village chief (see the ground plan, Fig. 63). Personal name, Pan Sung; family name, Sen Ku (the Lao call him Tsin Tsai). By his first wife, who died four years ago, he had 11 children, one of whom died. By his second, present [587] wife he has two children, two and three years of age. His wife brought seven children into the marriage. In addition, he [595] has in his house the cousin of the White Meau of house 5 as his secondary wife, but no children by her. Two married sons with wives also live in the house.

House 7: See the groundplan, Fig. 67. The father of the [551] house is a White Meau: personal name, You Wu; family name, Tau. He is the youngest brother of the father of house 5, that [756] is to say, the cousin of the third wife of the chief. The housewife is a White Meau and a female shaman. She had seven children; three adult sons died two years ago, [731] one after another, of cholera. The surviving members of the family therefore fled [164] to relatives in Nam Fa.